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European Security and the OSCE - A Greek View

Since the end of the Cold War, many people have come to believe that we stand on the threshold of a new era. Over the past few years we have seen revolutionary changes burst upon the world stage with a suddenness that both shocks and bewilders. Whether these changes portend a more peaceful future remains unclear. Rapid, unanticipated changes often create apprehension about the future of world affairs.

As policymakers and scholars have attempted to understand the profound transformations occurring since the end of the Cold War, they have found it difficult to free themselves from old habits of mind; yet it is imperative that they do. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the reunification of Germany, and the eruption of ethno-nationalist conflicts in South-eastern Europe and elsewhere, policymakers face a future whose geopolitical shape will be unlike the world of their memories. Because the Cold War is barely over, we face great uncertainty about where we are and the direction in which international relations are headed. Judging what to do and how to do it presents a formidable challenge, which explains why policymakers across the globe have yet to sort out the complexities of a world suddenly wrenched from the rigid discipline of two power centres.

This opening statement, though cliché-ridden and highly unoriginal, is nonetheless valid as the necessary and possibly most appropriate introduction to any perceptive consideration of the new security order in post-Wall Europe.

The dense institutionalization of the European security arena should be viewed as the most suitable and credible answer to the challenges of an environment greatly affected by transitional crises and multidimensional threats to a world free of superpower struggle. In this context, international institutions can be even more effective in stabilizing actors' expectations and can be instrumental in shaping conditions that can promote co-operative or at least non-conflictual state intervention.

The OSCE: Continuity and Change

NATO enlargement and its role in peace support operations have tended to dominate the European security debate for the better part of the decade. Yet, NATO defines itself as but an "integral part of the emerging, broadly based, cooperative security structure". The Alliance has also identified the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) as having "an essen-

tial role to play in European security and stability (...) in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts".¹

Comprising 55 participating States and dealing with security, economic, and human rights issues, the OSCE enjoys a unique and non-exclusionary competence - as demonstrated by its monitoring role in Chechnya, Crimea, Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Moldova, and Nagorno-Karabakh, along with its large-scale and well-known operational role in Bosnia and Herzegovina and most recently Albania to set the foundations for elections, monitor human rights, and oversee arms control negotiations. Unlike the United Nations, the OSCE enjoys direct competence in overseeing not only interstate but intrastate affairs - that is, precisely those most likely to create security problems in Europe.

During the Cold War, the function of the then CSCE was ostensibly to bridge the European divide. In practice the CSCE mirrored the divide and did not overcome it. The lack of institutionalization did not allow the CSCE process to contribute to European security as much as it should have done. The Paris Summit took place in November 1990 against the background of a changing European order that was in turn to change the CSCE. The adoption of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe represented a major development and at the same time marked the beginning of the CSCE's institutionalization.

The Valletta, Moscow and Prague meetings further accelerated the CSCE's development. The Helsinki Summit in 1992 confirmed the Prague decisions and widened the role of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO). Within the CSO an Economic Forum was created to review commitments under Basket II and with regard to market matters. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) was also enhanced to monitor the human dimension and support the newly created High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM). The HCNM was seen as an institution to act at the earliest possible stage to resolve tensions involving national minority issues which had not developed into conflicts. Another important "product" of the Summit was the creation of the Forum for Security Co-operation based in Vienna. The Forum was entrusted with three roles: first, negotiation of conventional disarmament measures; second, promotion of Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs); and third, reducing the risk of conflict. The final innovation of the Summit was its adoption of peacekeeping. The CSCE defined peacemaking in accord with the classical UN understanding, that is, a non-enforcement role, strict impartiality and requiring the consent of all parties to the dispute. CSCE peacekeeping operations would not proceed without an effective cease-fire in place and guarantees for the safety of personnel.

1 NATO Press and Media Service, Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Berlin, 3 June 1996, Final Communiqué, Press Communiqué M-NAC-1(96)63, 3 June 1996, p. 1 and p. 11.

Resources and expertise were to be drawn from NATO, the EU, WEU or the CIS. A more direct linkage to NATO was opposed by France and the CSCE was to turn to NATO on a case-by-case basis.

In Search of Identity and Role

The Helsinki Document marked the transition of the CSCE from a forum for dialogue to an operational structure. In 1995 the new OSCE further defined its post-Cold War identity and role in the European security architecture. The need to respond to new challenges found expression in the development of new strategies and policies that focus on the prevention of conflicts. Early warning, conflict prevention and crisis management have become main features of the OSCE. They are based on, and directly linked to, the tasks of the OSCE in the human dimension field and its efforts to contribute to the development of co-operative security.

The OSCE involvement in conflict prevention has been closely linked to the human dimension and protection of minority rights. The HCNM has been involved in a number of cases, including the plight of ethnic Russians in Latvia and Estonia; the Hungarian minority in Slovakia; the Slovak minority in Hungary; the Hungarian minority in Romania; the Albanian minority in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the Greek minority in Albania; and Ukraine-Crimean relations. Fact-finding missions have been dispatched and augmented with OSCE "good offices" on the ground. By these means the OSCE has sought to facilitate settlements in Moldova and Nagorno-Karabakh.

At the same time, the establishment of the FSC put an end to the situation in which, since the 1970s, the CSCE "was relegated to the negotiation of Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs), and subsequently Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs), because the CSCE could not become involved in disarmament negotiations, which, at the time, were the province of those forums (MBFR and CFE, K.I.) restricted to the members of the two military alliances".² Conceptually speaking, the decision to establish the FSC lays the groundwork for a new approach to military aspects of security in post-Cold War Europe; from a practical standpoint, it created an original instrument, given its functions, its Programme for Immediate Action, and the broad area of application of that programme.

Chapter V of the 1992 Helsinki Document, which is the FSC's mandate, has assigned it a triple role. The first of these roles is the negotiation of concrete and militarily significant measures to reduce the conventional armed forces

2 Victor -Yves Ghebali, *The CSCE Forum for Security Cooperation: the opening gambits*, in: *NATO Review*, June 1993, pp. 23-27, p. 23.

of the OSCE States or to maintain them at a minimum level commensurate with legitimate security requirements within Europe and beyond.

The Forum's Programme for Immediate Action delineates six areas for negotiation:

- the harmonization of obligations contracted by OSCE States under the various agreements on conventional armed forces in Europe;
- the development of CSBMs set out in the Vienna Document 1992;
- the adoption of new stabilizing measures and CBMs, including measures to address force generation capabilities of active and non-active forces;
- the development of a system for the exchange of military information on an annual world-wide basis;
- co-operation in the fields of non-proliferation and international arms transfers;
- the adoption of regional arms reduction and arms limitation measures.

In other words, the profound aim was to continue and to develop the dynamic process generated by CFE (Conventional Armed Forces in Europe), CFE 1A, Open Skies and the 1992 Vienna Document on CSBMs.

The second FSC role called for a co-operative dialogue in areas such as military force planning, co-operation in defence industry conversion, development of military contacts, establishment of a code of conduct covering politico-military aspects of security, co-operation in respect of non-proliferation and arms transfers and regional security questions.

As far as the third role is concerned, by setting up the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC), the Paris Summit began to sketch out a larger conflict prevention role for the CSCE, going beyond the promotion and management of CSBMs. The Berlin Ministerial Council (June 1991) established the "emergency mechanism" that was to be repeatedly activated, albeit unsuccessfully, in former Yugoslavia. The Rome Council (October 1993), however, decided to degrade the CPC to a mere department of the Vienna Secretariat, transferring its main political competencies partly to the Permanent Council and partly to the FSC.

As a result of these and other decisions, the OSCE acquired a variety of conflict prevention instruments. In one way or another, all main bodies of the Organization contribute to conflict prevention. The conflict prevention function of the ODIHR is the establishment of an even closer connection between security and human rights and it has given to the Organization one of its most important advantages with respect to other institutions. Moreover, the HCNM is the body which again creates an organic link between security and human rights. The HCNM's specific task is to provide "early warning" and to carry out "early action" in case of tensions involving minority groups that

could escalate into open conflicts. The HCNM has proved the most successful of the OSCE's organs as it has dealt effectively with a major risk factor in Europe - i.e. the tensions between states and national minorities whose claims are supported, more or less openly, by the states of origin. It is important to note that the HCNM is not an instrument for the protection of minorities or a sort of international ombudsman who acts on their behalf. In other words s/he is High Commissioner *on*, and not *for* national minorities.³ In that respect, the co-operative and non-coercive nature of the HCNM's involvement should be emphasized. Overall, the changing political environment and the fact that so many OSCE States see the need to understate new and complementary rules of behaviour show that minority questions should always be approached from a totally new perspective to guarantee peace in post-Cold War Europe.

In Search of a Security Order

Without any doubt the OSCE is confronted with the challenge to contribute to the restructuring of the European state system after the end of the East-West confrontation in the sense of providing stability and reliability and of endorsing the evolution of democracy in post-communist Eastern Europe. Although the idea of the OSCE as a pan-European system of collective security is too far-fetched, it certainly has the potential to make a number of contributions to the organisation of a peaceful security order.

At Helsinki and Budapest the palpable need for interaction and co-operation between the various institutions was felt. It was understood that new opportunities could not be created and real security guaranteed by one institution alone. A successful "security architecture" requires truly interlocking co-operation among the existing potential institutional stabilizers.

There is no doubt that the OSCE does not represent the often called for grand security design, nor is it the central pillar of the European institutional structure. The OSCE is a vehicle of co-operative security. It is not a defence alliance. It cannot offer "all-for-one, one-for-all" security guarantees. It has neither its own military capabilities nor the potential to create any. In this sense, it cannot offer the specific security improvements that the Central Eastern and South-eastern European countries seek in order to consolidate their newly acquired democratic systems.

The OSCE cannot and should not be portrayed simply as an alternative to NATO. It is not "the other option" for building European security.⁴ The

3 Max van der Stoep, "Report for the OSCE Implementation Meeting on Human Dimension Issues, Warsaw, 2 October 1995.

4 Piotr Switalski, An Ally for the Central and Eastern European States, in: Transition 11/1995, pp. 26-29.

OSCE and NATO should be approached as elements of the same option, in which they play different but complementary roles. A strong OSCE is an ally of a strong NATO. The political legitimacy it can bestow on instruments or policies either of its own or of institutions such as NATO is of extreme importance. By virtue of its membership and decision-making procedures the OSCE can confirm the legitimate nature of an intervention in the affairs of a state or between states. This political and moral authority, which is not shared by NATO or the WEU, will be enhanced as the Organization becomes embedded in popular consciousness.

The OSCE, with its vocation as a guardian of security and a bulwark against new divisions, can be a useful stabilizer of NATO's enlargement. It is not only a question of providing Russia with possibilities for constructive involvement in European Security matters; it is also a matter of ensuring that countries such as Bulgaria, Ukraine or Moldova are not placed too far from European structures as a consequence of such enlargement.

Also, with its wider understanding of security, which includes human rights, economics, and the military dimension, it can provide many of the instruments that we now need to manage changes and cope with the complex and multi-faceted challenges of European security. The recent work of the OSCE in Albania shows that meta-communist societies have security concerns that can be well addressed by the OSCE. Although no OSCE peacekeeping mechanisms are involved, in the sense that the Alba multinational force is not under the Organization's direct control, its presence has been instrumental in safeguarding the election process and showing to a certain extent that security in Europe should not be considered as divisible. That is dangerous not only for the specific situation, but for the precedent it sets and the message it sends to the other European countries in transition.

Of course, the OSCE is not the answer to all the countries' or indeed the region's security problems. But it is a very useful instrument and its possibilities should be fully utilised. In an era characterized by unprecedented prospects of co-operation among states but also by a large variety of risks, the consolidation of the OSCE's role as one of the pillars of European security will depend largely on its ability to make full use of its most promising resources: the close link between the protection of human rights and the promotion of security; the authority it enjoys by virtue of its norm-setting function and the vast number of participating States; the opportunities it provides for the gradual integration of the new democracies of Eastern and South-eastern Europe; the flexibility of its institutional structure and its mechanisms. Above all, the chances of building a stable and secure Europe will depend, as Max van der Stoep put, "on our determination to realize what we have neglected for much too long: a comprehensive policy of conflict prevention".